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Weed control - English ivy

Four cultivars of English ivy (*Hedera helix* and *H. hibernica*) are included on the 2005 Washington State Class C Noxious Weed List. Control is strongly encouraged, though not required. Introduced from Europe, this weed grows nearly year-round, has no natural predators and spreads rapidly through both vegetative and sexual reproduction. English ivy outcompetes native understory plants and can kill even large overstory species. Ivy grows up trunks shading out foliage and causing trees to become top-heavy and more likely to blow down. The very shallow-rooted ivy can also hide erosion problems and cause slopes to fail when precipitation-laden ivy mats become too heavy for the roots to hold. Ivy berries and leaves are toxic if consumed in large quantities, and contact with ivy sap can cause a dermatitis reaction for some people. As with all weeds, proper maintenance of a site following control to remove new ivy individuals is crucial to prevent re-infestation.

Ivy flowers and fruits predominantly on vertical vines, so emphasize/prioritize removing ivy from trees. Cut through vines at shoulder height and slightly above ground level to remove ivy from the trunk, then clear an area at least 6' from the base of the tree on all sides. In areas devoid of desirable vegetation, chop through ivy roots with a sharp spade in a line and then peel back the mat of vegetation into a large ivy roll. Attempt to retain existing native vegetation as much as possible by clearing the ivy surrounding desirables first. Ivy can resprout from below-ground portions so roots should also be removed. Weed wrenches can be used to remove especially large root masses or roots around the base of trees. Drier soils make root removal during summer more difficult than at other times of the year. However, if the ivy is growing on a slope, you may need to work in summer so you have time to install erosion controls. Follow up ivy removal with thick mulch to minimize soil erosion and resprouting or new ivy individuals. Pile ivy on cardboard for at least one week to desiccate the plants. Regularly rotate the piles to ensure all plants are exposed to air and do not allow the piles to come in contact with soil.

Because of ivy's waxy cuticle, herbicides have limited effects and timing of application is of utmost importance. Recent research has shown promising results from treating *Hedera helix* with glyphosate or triclopyr plus a surfactant when applied on a clear, two-day period during winter (ideally January) with above-freezing temperatures. At this time, ivy should be detectable following fall leaf drop and actively growing. Most desirable vegetation is likely to be dormant and less likely to respond to the herbicide. The effect of the herbicide treatment may take several months to register, but 95% control is possible. Follow up with revegetation of native species and removal of remnant ivy individuals.

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